



June 2016

DEFENSE CIVIL SUPPORT

DOD Has Made
Progress
Incorporating the
Homeland Response
Force into the
Chemical, Biological,
Radiological, and
Nuclear Response
Enterprise

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-599](#), a report to the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD is expected to play a prominent role supporting civil authorities in a CBRN incident. By 2012, DOD had established the HRF, comprising 10 geographically dispersed National Guard forces. Each of the 10 HRFs consists of 583 authorized Army National Guard and Air National Guard personnel who, as part of the HRF, are to respond within 6 to 12 hours of a request for assistance. The HRF, as part of DOD's CBRN Response Enterprise, is intended to bridge the gap between the National Guard's initial response to a CBRN incident and any need for additional capabilities that the DOD military services' active-duty personnel can provide, if requested. The HRF is to provide command and control, search and extraction, medical triage, decontamination, fatality search and recovery, and assistance and support capabilities.

House Report 114-102 included a provision that GAO review matters related to the HRF. This report (1) describes the current status of HRF capabilities and readiness and (2) assesses DOD's progress incorporating the HRF into the CBRN Response Enterprise. GAO examined National Guard fiscal year 2013-15 evaluation reports and fiscal year 2012 through March 2016 readiness information; reviewed combatant command plans and DOD guidance; and surveyed all 10 HRF Commanders about HRF readiness.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making any recommendations. DOD's technical comments on a draft of this report were incorporated in the final product.

View [GAO-16-599](#) or key components. For more information, contact Joseph W. Kirschbaum, (202) 512-9971, kirschbaumj@gao.gov.

June 2016

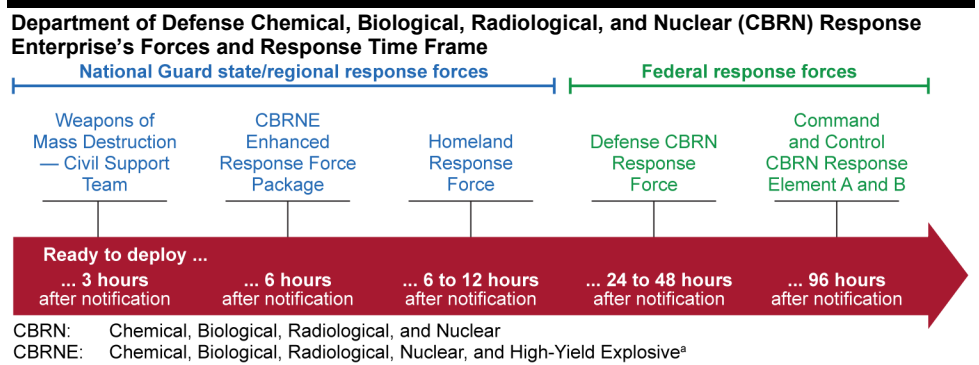
DEFENSE CIVIL SUPPORT

DOD Has Made Progress Incorporating the Homeland Response Force into the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Response Enterprise

What GAO Found

The National Guard has determined, through established capabilities and readiness measures, that the Homeland Response Force (HRF) is ready to conduct the HRF mission if called upon. The Department of Defense's (DOD) National Guard Bureau uses an evaluation of necessary tasks and actions as a primary measure of HRF capabilities and DOD's Defense Readiness Reporting System as a primary measure of readiness status. Six HRF Commanders told GAO that they have a goal to train between 10 percent and 30 percent additional National Guard personnel with prior HRF or similar mission experience. According to the HRF Commanders, these additional personnel, over the 583 authorized personnel, can mitigate the loss of personnel through turnover and other deployment disqualification factors, such as medical and personal factors. The capability and readiness measures indicate that the 10 HRFs are prepared for their mission. However, while the Federal Emergency Management Agency Region X (Washington) HRF partially deployed to support civil authorities after a mudslide occurred, until an entire HRF is deployed in response to a chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) incident, the HRF capabilities and mission readiness will not be entirely known.

DOD has made progress in incorporating the HRF into the CBRN Response Enterprise by updating plans, guidance, and exercises. For example, GAO found that DOD is synchronizing major exercise schedules, thereby increasing the opportunity for the HRF to exercise with the other CBRN Response Enterprise National Guard and federal response forces. The figure below shows the plan for DOD's response to a CBRN incident.



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense information. | GAO-16-599

^aDOD's CBRN Response Enterprise is generally structured to support the response to a CBRN incident. The CBRN Response Enterprise does not maintain Explosive Ordnance Disposal capabilities—those capabilities related to the "E" in CBRNE—but is able to provide capabilities to manage the consequence of an explosion during a post-blast response.

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Abbreviations

CBRN	Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear
CBRNE	Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosive
CERFP	CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package
DOD	Department of Defense
DSCA	Defense Support of Civil Authorities
FSRT	Fatality Search and Recovery Team
FY	Fiscal Year
HRF	Homeland Response Force
JMEEL	Joint Mission Essential Equipment List
T&EO	Training and Evaluation Outlines

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June 28, 2016

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Threats to the homeland, major disasters, and emergencies are frequently unpredictable and may occur with little or no warning. The Department of Defense (DOD) often is expected to play a prominent role supporting civil authorities and must be prepared to provide a rapid response when called upon to respond to an incident. In the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*,¹ the Secretary of Defense directed DOD to restructure its Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives Consequence Management Response Force to enhance its lifesaving capabilities, maximize its flexibility, and reduce response times through regional forces. In response, DOD established the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Response Enterprise and, according to DOD's estimate, between fiscal year 2011 and 2012 the department spent about \$43 million to establish the Homeland Response Force (HRF) as part of that enterprise.² The HRF consists of 10 National Guard forces—one in each of the 10 Federal Emergency Management Agency regions across the United States. Each of the 10 HRFs consists of 583 authorized Army and Air National Guard personnel who, as part of the HRF, are to bridge the gap between the initial response by the National Guard in its State Active Duty or Title 32 status to a Governor's request for assistance and the need for additional capabilities provided by the active-duty military service members in their

¹DOD, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Feb. 1, 2010).

²DOD's CBRN Response Enterprise is generally structured to support the response to a CBRN incident. The CBRN Response Enterprise does not maintain Explosive Ordnance Disposal capabilities—those capabilities related to the "E" in CBRNE—but is able to provide capabilities to manage the consequence of an explosion during a post-blast response.

Title 10 status.³ According to the DOD analysis conducted prior to and during the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, the addition of the HRF to DOD's CBRN Response Enterprise would provide critical advantages through faster response times; additional personnel for lifesaving capabilities; increased regional distribution and integration; a better balance between state and federal consequence management of the incident response; and a comprehensive approach to training, evaluation, and exercises.

In December 2011, we found that the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosive (CBRNE) Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) which comprise National Guard personnel, faced personnel, training, and equipment challenges.⁴ We made a number of recommendations to improve preparedness and ensure effective command and control of CERFP operations, among other improvements.⁵ As of June 2016, DOD had implemented 10 of our 11 recommendations.⁶ In addition, in June 2015, we testified on the progress and remaining challenges DOD faces in addressing our recommendations to strengthen its strategy, plans, and guidance in

³Title 32 and Title 10 are titles of the United States Code. Title 10 governs the operation of DOD and the armed forces generally, while Title 32 governs the National Guard specifically. The term "Title 32" generally is used to refer to National Guard forces that are federally funded and under the command and control of the state Governor. The term "State Active Duty" generally is used to refer to forces that are funded by and under the command and control of the state. The term "Title 10" is generally used to refer to forces that are federally funded and under the command and control of the President and the Secretary of Defense.

⁴As part of the CBRN Response Enterprise, the CERFP does not maintain Explosive Ordnance Disposal capabilities—those capabilities related to the "E" in CBRNE—but is able to provide capabilities to manage the consequence of an explosion during a post-blast response.

⁵See GAO, *Homeland Defense and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Additional Steps Could Enhance the Effectiveness of the National Guard's Life-Saving Response Forces*, [GAO-12-114](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 7, 2011).

⁶We are reviewing actions taken by DOD to address the remaining recommendation.

support of civil authorities.⁷ See the Related GAO Reports section for additional reports on support of civil authorities.

House Report 114-102, accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016, included a provision that we review the preparedness of the HRF to accomplish its mission.⁸ In this report, we (1) describe the current status of HRF capabilities and readiness and (2) assess DOD's progress incorporating the HRF into its CBRN Response Enterprise.

To describe the status of HRF capabilities—the tasks and actions necessary to conduct the mission—we examined the National Guard Bureau's Joint Interagency Training and Education Center's fiscal year 2013-15 evaluation reports, the most recent reports issued for each HRF on its performance. We analyzed each HRF evaluation report to identify any systemic capability strengths or areas for improvement that the National Guard Bureau had identified during the evaluations. We reviewed the process used by the National Guard Bureau to ensure the reliability and validity of its own evaluation process and determined that the evaluation process was sufficient for our use in examining the status of HRF capabilities. We relied on the results of those 10 evaluations rather than conducting an independent assessment of HRF capabilities. To describe the current status of HRF readiness—the personnel, related training, and equipment necessary to conduct the mission—we analyzed readiness information for each HRF input into DOD's Defense Readiness Reporting System for fiscal year 2012, the year by which all 10 HRFs

⁷DOD partially addressed our recommendation that DOD update and implement better guidance for the use of dual-status commanders. DOD also addressed our recommendations to improve interagency coordination for civil support. Finally, as of June 2015, DOD officials told us that they were taking action to improve the identification of capabilities for support of civil authorities. See GAO, *Civil Support: DOD Is Taking Action to Strengthen Support of Civil Authorities*, [GAO-15-686T](#), (Washington, D.C.: June 10, 2015). "Dual-status commanders" are commissioned officers (Army or Air Force or a federally recognized Army National Guard or Air National Guard officer) who serve as an intermediate link between the separate chains-of-command for state and federal forces and have authority over both National Guard forces under state control and active-duty forces under federal control during a civil support incident or special event.

⁸H.R. Rep. No. 114-102, at 216 (2015).

were established, through March 2016.⁹ We also conducted a data reliability assessment of the information in the Defense Readiness Reporting System. We provided a questionnaire on the readiness system to officials in the National Guard Bureau's CBRN Enterprise Training and Readiness Office. We reviewed their responses to our questionnaire and interviewed the official responsible for maintaining the readiness data input by each HRF. We determined that the information was reliable for our purposes. We received responses from all 10 HRF Commanders to a survey on personnel, on the relevance of training on readiness, and on equipment needed to conduct the mission. In addition, we conducted four site visits to HRFs located in Federal Emergency Management Agency Region III (Pennsylvania), Region IV (Georgia), Region VI (Texas), and Region X (Washington), based on factors such as HRF readiness, forces with upcoming exercises, regions with cities with an Urban Areas Security Initiative designation,¹⁰ and input from various DOD CBRN Response and Federal Emergency Management Agency officials, among other factors. We chose these HRFs because they had at one time deployed part of their force to support civil authorities, had upcoming exercises scheduled, or were recommended by officials knowledgeable of the HRF. During our site visits, we interviewed HRF Commanders and personnel about maintaining capabilities and readiness and observed equipment and temporary facilities used to support a response. While our discussions and observations from these visits are not generalizable, the information we collected from the HRF Commanders and their personnel provide context for the evaluation results and the Commander's comments from the readiness system.

To assess DOD's progress incorporating the HRF into the DOD CBRN Response Enterprise, we reviewed plans and guidance from the

⁹The Defense Readiness Reporting System is used to monitor the readiness of DOD components to provide capabilities to support the *National Military Strategy* as directed by presidential and Secretary of Defense guidance. The system encompasses the automated, near real-time readiness reporting systems that provide current readiness status for operational forces and defense support organizations in terms of their ability to perform their mission-essential task lists. See DOD Directive 7730.65, *Department of Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS)* (May 11, 2015).

¹⁰Cities with the urban areas security initiative designation are part of the Urban Areas Security Initiative, a Department of Homeland Security grant program, that provides federal assistance to address the unique needs of high-threat, high-density urban areas, and assists them in building an enhanced and sustainable capacity to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism.

U.S. Northern Command, the U.S. Pacific Command, the National Guard Bureau, the Army, and the Air Force. For example, we reviewed the U.S. Northern Command's and the U.S. Pacific Command's *Defense Support of Civil Authorities* (DSCA) plans and the National Guard Bureau's HRF guidance, including the *HRF/CERFP Concept of Operation*.¹¹ We compared these plans with the direction and guidance for DOD's efforts to, among other things, create faster response times and increase the regional distribution and integration of DOD CBRN response assets, outlined in the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, the 2010 National Guard Bureau *Implementation Base Plan* for the introduction of the concept and establishment of the HRF, and the 2013 DOD *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Defense Support of Civil Authorities*.¹² We also reviewed information and planning documents on U.S. Northern Command- and National Guard Bureau-sponsored exercises to determine whether the HRF had opportunities to exercise with other DOD CBRN response forces. In addition, we surveyed HRF Commanders about their participation in exercises with other DOD CBRN response forces. Finally, we interviewed DOD officials within the U.S. Northern Command, the U.S. Pacific Command, and the National Guard Bureau about the inclusion of the HRF into DOD's CBRN Response Enterprise. In addition, during our four site visits, we interviewed HRF staff about the types of exercises they conduct on CBRN response and their opportunities to practice with other DOD CBRN response forces. Appendix I discusses our scope and methodology in greater detail.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2015 to June 2016 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

¹¹National Guard Bureau, *Homeland Response Force Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package Concept of Operation* (Oct. 14, 2015).

¹²DOD, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Feb. 1, 2010); National Guard Bureau, *Implementation Base Plan (IMPLAN)–Homeland Response Force (HRF/CERFP)* (Sept. 30, 2010); and DOD, *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Defense Support of Civil Authorities* (Feb. 2013).

Background

National Response Framework

The *National Response Framework*¹³ establishes the principles that guide all response partners, including federal, state, local, private, and other entities, in preparing for and providing a unified national response to disasters—including those involving CBRNE materials. Under this framework, disaster response is tiered, beginning with local governments and agencies typically responding immediately following an incident. When additional resources are requested, a state may provide assistance with its capabilities, including its National Guard, or may request assistance from other states through interstate mutual agreements or the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.¹⁴ If an incident requires capabilities beyond those available at the local and state levels, the Governor can seek federal assistance. When coordination of federal response activities is required, the Department of Homeland Security—through the Federal Emergency Management Agency—is generally responsible for coordinating such federal assistance, including assistance provided by DOD.

In February 2013, DOD released its updated *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Defense Support of Civil Authorities*, which highlights the objective to “maintain defense preparedness for domestic CBRN” incident in order to support the mission to provide defense support of civil authorities.¹⁵ DOD often is expected to play a prominent role supporting civil authorities and, in accordance with DOD guidance, must be prepared to provide rapid response when called upon.¹⁶ To facilitate defense support of civil authorities across the nation and at all organizational levels, DOD has assigned responsibilities for this mission within the Office

¹³Department of Homeland Security, *National Response Framework* (Washington, D.C.: June 2016). The National Response Framework is a guide to how federal, state, local, and tribal governments, along with nongovernmental and private sector entities, collectively respond to and recover from all hazards.

¹⁴The Emergency Management Assistance Compact—a mutual aid agreement among member states—provides form and structure to interstate mutual aid by addressing a number of key issues.

¹⁵DOD, *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Defense Support of Civil Authorities* (Feb. 2013).

¹⁶See, e.g., DOD Directive 3025.18, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA)* (Dec. 29, 2010) (incorporating change, Sept. 21, 2012).

of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the U.S. Northern Command, the U.S. Pacific Command, the National Guard Bureau, regional interagency liaisons, and a number of other DOD components, including roles and responsibilities with respect to military service units assigned the CBRN response mission.

CBRN Response Enterprise

DOD's CBRN Response Enterprise, which provides capabilities to support civil authorities under the *National Response Framework*, is composed of both active federal and state-controlled National Guard forces. The National Guard personnel comprise 56 percent of DOD's CBRN Response Enterprise, including 10 HRF, 17 CERFP, and 57 Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Teams. The federal military forces comprise about 44 percent of DOD's CBRN Response Enterprise, including the Defense CBRN Response Force and Command and Control CBRN Response Element A/B, which bring additional lifesaving and command and control capabilities to a CBRN response. The National Guard forces generally operate in State Active Duty or Title 32 status and remain under the command and control of respective state Governors, unless they are federalized under Title 10 and placed under the command and control of the President and the Secretary of Defense. Federal military response forces, such as the Defense CBRN Response Force, are always in Title 10 status.¹⁷ Table 1 identifies the respective response in statuses between National Guard and federal forces for a CBRN incident.

¹⁷The operational status of National Guard forces responding to a CBRN incident would generally be determined by the extent of the incident. National Guard forces generally operate in State Active Duty, Title 32, or Title 10, statuses. The term "State Active Duty" generally is used to refer to forces that are state funded and under the command and control of the state Governor. The term "Title 32," referring the U.S. Code, generally is used to refer to National Guard forces that are federally funded and under the command and control of the state Governor. The term "Title 10" generally is used to refer to forces that are federally funded and under the command and control of the President and the Secretary of Defense.

Table 1: Response Status of National Guard and Federal Forces for a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, or Nuclear (CBRN) Incident

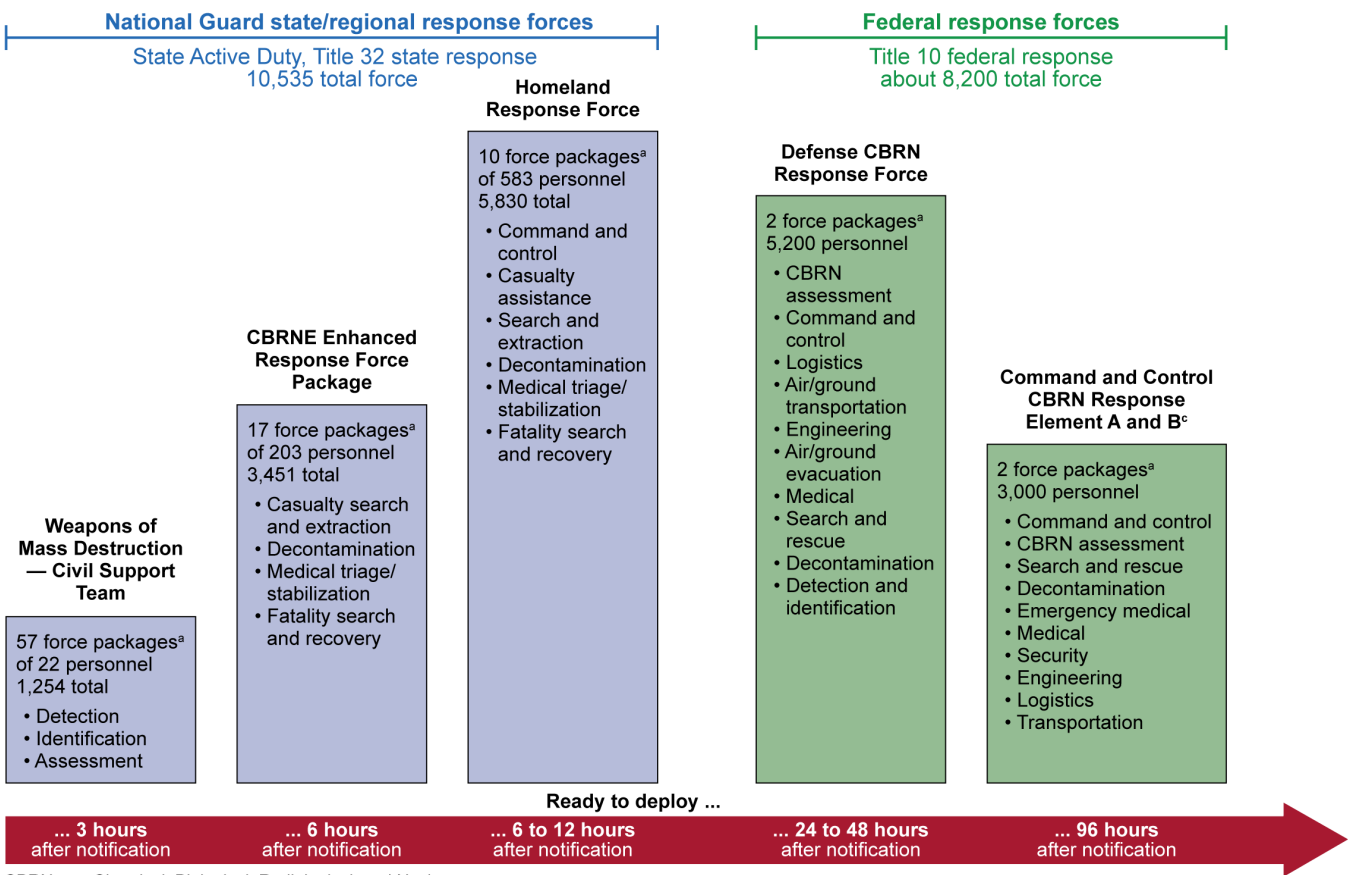
	National Guard State Active Duty forces	National Guard Title 32 forces	Federal Title 10^a forces
Command and control	Governor	Governor	President
Location	Within the state or state to state	United States	United States and worldwide
Funding	State	Federal	Federal
Mission type	State domestic operations, including response to local emergencies	Federal training, defense support of civil authorities; and other missions	Federal missions, including defense support of civil authorities; and overseas training

Source: Department of Defense. | GAO-16-599.

^aMembers of the National Guard are expected to respond to a CBRN incident in a Title 10 status in extreme circumstances.

As figure 1 shows, DOD intends that the National Guard forces, under a Governor's control, will be the first DOD forces to respond to an incident. A HRF is expected to be ready to deploy within 6 to 12 hours of notification of an incident requiring its capabilities. A National Guard response, including the HRF if such capabilities are needed, can be followed by a federal response if requested by the Governor of the affected state.

Figure 1: Department of Defense Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Response Enterprise’s Forces, Capabilities, and Response Time Frames



CBRN: Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear
CBRNE: Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosive^b

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense information. | GAO-16-599

^aA “package” is a resourced set of trained personnel and equipment available to respond to an emergency or disaster, such as a CBRN incident.

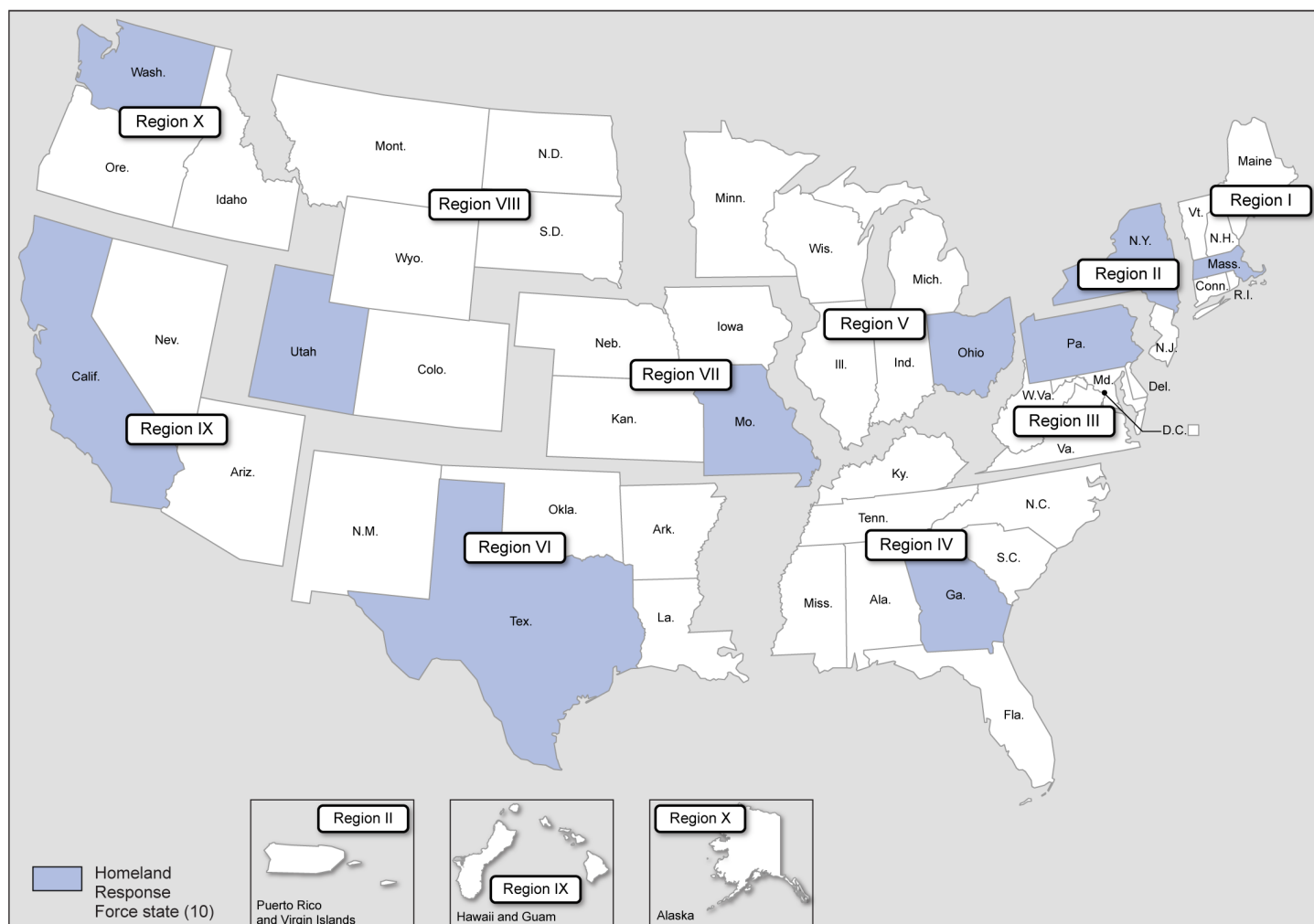
^bDOD’s CBRN Response Enterprise is generally structured to support the response to a CBRN incident. Therefore, the Enterprise does not maintain Explosive Ordnance Disposal capabilities—those capabilities related to the “E” in CBRNE—but is able to provide capabilities to manage the consequence of an explosion during a post-blast response.

^cThe Command and Control CBRN Response Element A primarily comprises Army reserve forces and the Command and Control CBRN Response Element B primarily comprises Army National Guard forces.

Homeland Response Force

The HRF mission is assigned by the states’ National Guard and the mission may be rotated among units within the state. Figure 2 shows that one HRF is located in each of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s 10 regions.

Figure 2: Homeland Response Force Locations in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's 10 Regions



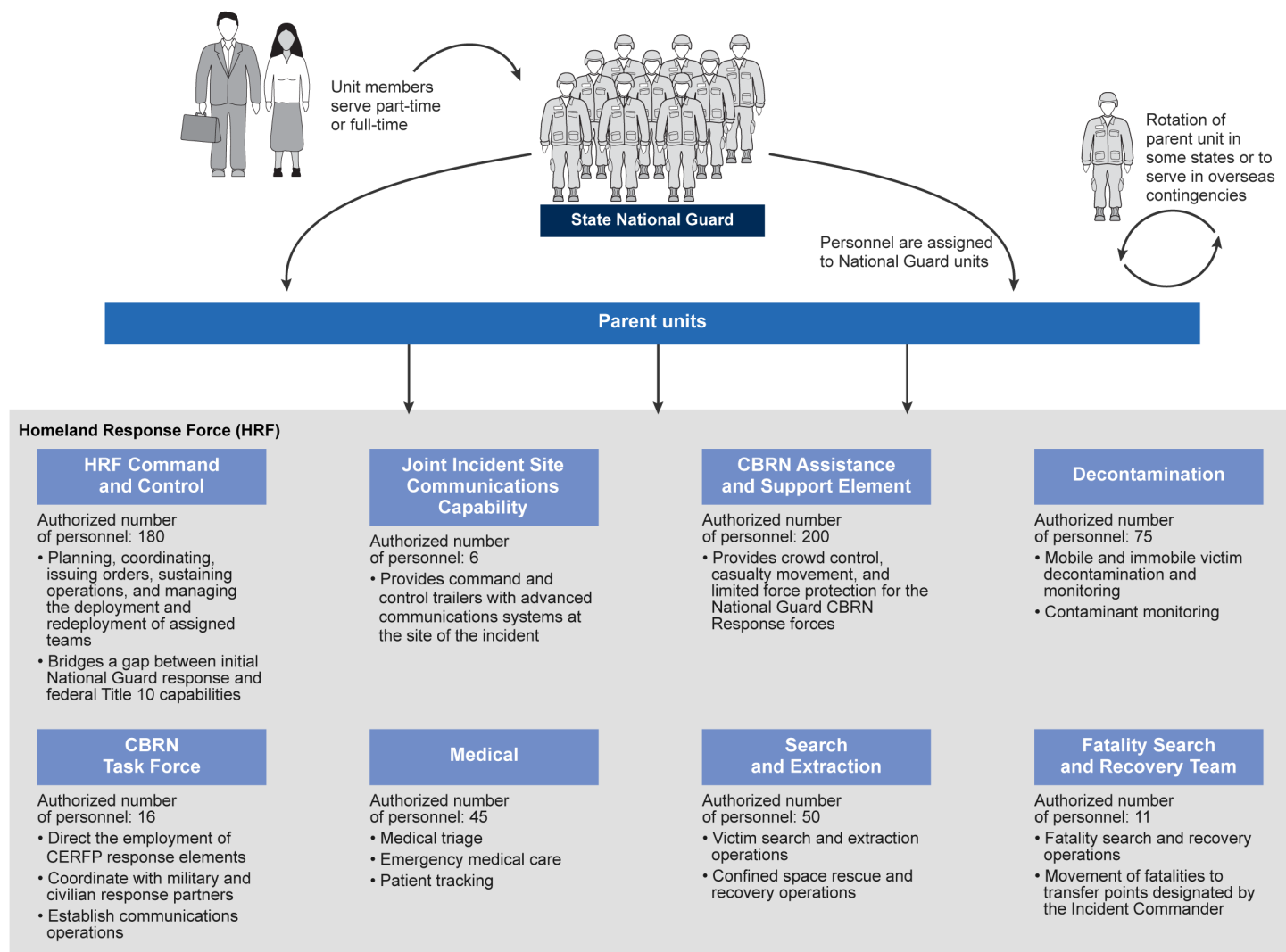
Source: Department of Defense. | GAO-16-599

As seen in figure 3, each of the 10 HRFs consist of 583 personnel divided among command and control (180 authorized personnel to the HRF and 16 authorized personnel to the CERFP), Joint Incident Site Communications Capability (6 authorized personnel), casualty assistance (200 authorized personnel), medical triage/stabilization (45 authorized personnel), decontamination (75 authorized personnel), search and extraction (50 authorized personnel), and fatality search and recovery (11 authorized personnel) capabilities. Additionally, for Army personnel, the HRF mission is a second mission to their Army National Guard wartime mission. The HRF mission is the primary mission for the Air

National Guard.¹⁸ Finally, the HRF does not maintain Explosive Ordnance Disposal capabilities, those capabilities related to the “E” in CBRNE, but is able to provide capabilities to manage the consequence of a high-yield explosion during a post-blast response.

¹⁸There are no separate HRF units—only National Guard units with a HRF mission.

Figure 3: The Homeland Response Force (HRF) and Capabilities



CBRN: Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear
 CBRNE: Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosive
 CERFP: CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package

Source: GAO analysis of National Guard Bureau information. | GAO-16-599

National Guard Has Measured and Determined That the 10 HRFs Are Maintaining Capabilities and Readiness to Conduct Their Mission

The National Guard has determined, through established capabilities and readiness measures, that the 10 HRFs are maintaining their capabilities and are ready to conduct the HRF mission. The National Guard Bureau uses an evaluation process conducted by its Joint Interagency Training and Education Center as a primary means to measure HRF capabilities. In addition, HRF Commanders report in DOD's Defense Readiness Reporting System—a primary means to measure readiness status—on the HRF's readiness to conduct its mission. HRF Commanders also provide comments in the Defense Readiness Reporting System on any issues impacting readiness.

The National Guard Has Conducted Evaluations to Measure HRF Capabilities and Has Validated Those Capabilities as Mission Ready

The National Guard Bureau¹⁹ uses its evaluation as a primary means to measure and has validated the capabilities of the HRF to conduct the necessary tasks and actions to meet its mission.²⁰ The National Guard's Joint Collective Training Branch, Joint Interagency Training and Education Center, develops scenarios for each evaluation. The National Guard and the U.S. Northern Command conduct the evaluation of each HRF every 36 months or more frequently if significant personnel rotation or transfers occur.

¹⁹The National Guard Bureau is a joint organization of DOD that is, by law, the channel of communications on all matters pertaining to the National Guard between (a) the Departments of the Army and the Air Force, and (b) the states. See 10 U.S.C. § 10501.

²⁰The National Guard describes HRF "validation" as the HRF readiness to respond to a request for assistance after a CBRN incident.

Homeland Response Force (HRF) CBRN Response Capabilities Assessed during the Evaluation

- HRF Command and Control
- CBRN Assistance and Support Element
- CBRN Enhance Force Package Command and Control
- Search and Extraction
- Fatality Search and Recovery Team
- Decontamination
- Medical

CBRN: Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear
Source: National Guard Bureau. | GAO-16-599

The criteria used to measure the HRF's CBRN response capabilities during the evaluation includes the necessary tasks and actions—Joint Mission Essential Task List²¹ and Training and Evaluation Outlines²²— as identified in the National Guard CBRN Response Enterprise Joint Mission Essential Task List to meet the mission, as it is defined in the *HRF/CERFP Concept of Operation*.

Figure 4 shows the Region X (Washington) HRF and the Region IV (Georgia) HRF, respectively, conducting decontamination tasks and practicing search and extraction tasks.

Figure 4: Region X (Washington) and Region IV (Georgia) Homeland Response Forces Conducting Decontamination and Search and Extraction Tasks during Their Evaluations



Source: National Guard, Washington and Georgia Homeland Response Forces. | GAO-16-599

²¹The Joint Mission Essential Task List comprises mission-essential tasks derived from the desired CBRN response capabilities based on the HRF mission and doctrine. For example, to conduct the decontamination capability, two of the essential tasks are to conduct ambulatory and nonambulatory decontamination.

²²Training and Evaluation Outlines are clearly defined, observable, and measureable activities or actions that require organized team or unit performance, leading to the accomplishment of a mission or capability function. For example, an action for the search and extraction capability is for the extraction team leader to assess the collapsed or damaged structure and report to the tactical operations center.

The results of the evaluation are briefed to the HRF Commander and reviewed by the Commander of Army North. The evaluation report is then sent to the HRF's state National Guard leadership, the Adjutant General, to validate the results of their HRF's evaluation. According to the National Guard officials who manage the evaluation process, the evaluations provide the entire HRF an opportunity to demonstrate its capabilities, particularly since an entire HRF has not deployed in support of civil authorities in response to a CBRN incident. See appendix II for examples of HRFs that have deployed part of the HRF in support of civil authorities.

In analyzing the National Guard's evaluation reports from fiscal years 2013-15 (the most recently issued evaluations for each of the 10 HRFs), we found that the Joint Integrated Evaluation Team reported on individual HRF strengths that were observed and made recommendations to individual HRFs to improve operations. Based on our analysis, a summary of the strengths and areas for improvement identified during the evaluations are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Fiscal Year 2013-15 Evaluation-Observed Homeland Response Forces' (HRFs) Strengths and Areas for Improvement

Strength	Area for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication across the HRF teams• Identification of perimeter work areas• Checking of equipment prior to evaluation• Briefing of detailed information by liaison to the fatality search and recovery teams for better situational awareness• Medical treatment for and prioritization of victims for transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop information management plan to improve the use of information in decision making• Inspect equipment before, during, and after operations• Ensure medical equipment is in place• Use monitoring equipment properly

Source: GAO analysis of National Guard Bureau information. | GAO-16-599

This summary of observations provides the kinds of individual observations noted by the evaluation teams and does not indicate systemic strengths or areas for improvement. The Joint Integrated Evaluation Team observed and reported on individuals' or teams' performance. For example, four CBRN Task Forces, part of the HRF, provided communication systems and situational awareness to keep their colleagues informed of the operational environment during their

evaluation. Figure 5 is an example of the CBRN Task Force command and control.²³

Figure 5: Region IV (Georgia) Homeland Response Force's CBRN Task Force Establishing Command and Control Communications during an Evaluation



CBRN: Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear

Source: National Guard, Georgia Homeland Response Force. | GAO-16-599

Region IV (Georgia) Homeland Response Force Medical Triage Provides Care during an Evaluation



Source: National Guard Bureau, Georgia Homeland Response Force. | GAO-16-599

Five Search and Extraction HRF teams ensured readiness of equipment prior to the start of their evaluation. Finally, five HRF medical personnel were recognized for proper care, including the attention to treatment of and the prioritization of transportation for actor-victims during their evaluations.

In addition, the Joint Integrated Evaluation Team identified areas of improvement for individual HRFs. In our analysis of the evaluation reports to determine the status of HRF capabilities, we found individual HRF areas for improvement but did not find systemic areas for improvement

²³The CBRN Task Force is the operational name of the HRF's CBRN Enhanced Response Force Package.

that would indicate widespread problems. For example, the DOD evaluators found that five HRFs needed to develop a plan on how to manage information to support HRF Commanders' decisions throughout the exercise.²⁴ The five HRFs have taken some action to address this recommendation. For example, one HRF Commander stated that the HRF has maintained a full-time, trained officer on knowledge management to ensure that principles of knowledge management are integrated into day-to-day operations and exercises. A second HRF Commander told us that the HRF has assigned a knowledge management officer and the HRF has increased the number of personnel with a knowledge management role. A third HRF Commander told us that the HRF has increased the number of personnel with knowledge management roles and included information knowledge into its exercises. A fourth HRF Commander reported that personnel were sent to a knowledge management course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Upon return, those personnel provided seminars to their colleagues on what they learned during the course. In addition, according to the HRF Commander, the HRF was updating its standard operating guidance and procedures. Finally, the fifth HRF Commander reported that the HRF updated the standard operating procedures, sent personnel to additional training on incident command, and changed the setup of the HRF's operations center. The Commander stated that these actions were to improve information flow across operations and administrative staff, to utilize the software system to increase the visibility of the HRF's activities during a response, and to allow the HRF to provide the Commander with information to make decisions.

Evaluators noted that three HRFs appeared to not check their Search and Extraction team equipment adequately before, during, or after the exercise operation. In two cases, rope equipment was not inspected, potentially putting team members at risk or delaying operations. In

²⁴The number of tasks and standards for information management increased between 2012 and 2015. According to the *Collective and Training and Evaluation Outlines (T&EO) for the National Guard: Homeland Response Force (HRF), Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP), Fatality Search and Recovery Team (FSRT)* (2013), the standard for managing information, which is also at times referred to as knowledge management, and data is that the staff collect, process, display, store, and disseminate relevant information; produce it in a usable format by creating a common operating picture tailored to user needs; and provide it to the right user at the right time to answer the Commander's critical information requirements, which enable the Commander to make timely and effective decisions.

another case, medical equipment was not located where the medical staff was treating actor-victims during the evaluation. Finally, in three cases, HRF personnel did not use air monitoring equipment properly, resulting in a potential contamination of the HRF response area. According to National Guard Bureau officials who oversee collective HRF exercises, the HRFs are expected to address evaluation recommendations through their annual training, collective exercises, and the Standardization Evaluation and Assistance Team Program inspections.

Commanders Measure and Report in the Defense Readiness Reporting System That the HRF Is Ready to Meet Its Mission

The HRF Commanders use the Defense Readiness Reporting System as a primary tool for tracking and reporting the status of HRF readiness and report through this system that their HRF is ready to conduct the necessary tasks and actions to meet its mission. DOD's Defense Readiness Reporting System provides mission readiness assessments based on metrics and supporting data from authoritative data sources throughout DOD.²⁵ The *HRF/CERFP Concept of Operation* identifies maintaining readiness with respect to personnel, related training, and equipment as a key task in preparing the HRF to perform its mission to save lives and reduce human suffering. The Defense Readiness Reporting System consists of two parts—a rating on whether the HRF is meeting personnel and equipment standards and the Commander's comments on any issues impacting readiness.²⁶ For example, at least 90 percent of the HRF personnel are expected to have received training to support deployment and 90 percent of the equipment is expected to be available for deployment. Each month, the HRF Commanders review the status of individual training and availability of equipment in their tracking systems. The status of the readiness of personnel and equipment to conduct the necessary tasks and actions to meet the HRF mission is input into the Defense Readiness Reporting System. From October 2012 through March 2016, each HRF Commander reported in the Defense

²⁵DOD readiness reporting guidance includes DOD Directive 7730.65, *Department of Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS)* (May 11, 2015), DOD Instruction 7730.66, *Guidance for the Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS)* (July 8, 2011), and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3401.02B, *Force Readiness Reporting* (May 31, 2011) (current as of July 17, 2014).

²⁶Section 482 of Title 10, U.S. Code requires the Secretary of Defense to submit quarterly reports to Congress regarding readiness issues, including the National Guard's readiness to perform civil support missions. See 10 U.S.C. § 482(a), (e). DOD reports on the HRF mission as part of its response to this requirement.

Readiness Reporting System that his or her HRF had maintained readiness necessary to conduct its mission. In 2014, the Region X (Washington) HRF demonstrated its capabilities and readiness by deploying fatality search and recovery responders and logistics and operations personnel in support of civil authorities after a mudslide occurred. However, until an entire HRF is deployed in response to a CBRN incident, the HRF capabilities and mission readiness of the HRF will not be entirely known.

In addition to our examination of the information presented in the Defense Readiness Reporting System, we surveyed individual HRFs on their readiness to conduct the mission. The HRF Commanders reported in our survey and in discussions during our site visits the steps they take to manage personnel and equipment.

According to the National Guard Bureau's 2015-16 planning guidance,²⁷ the primary objective for training, which includes individual and collective training, is to attain and sustain maximum mission readiness for immediate response in support of the Governors and the President. Such training may enable the HRF to reduce response times. This guidance requires, among other things, that at least 90 percent of assigned personnel be trained to support an incident response. Six HRF Commanders told us that they have a goal to maintain or are maintaining between 10 percent and 30 percent additional, trained National Guard personnel with prior HRF or similar mission experience. According to the Commanders, these additional personnel, above the 583 authorized HRF personnel, help ensure that enough personnel are ready to support the HRF mission.²⁸ According to some HRF Commanders, the additional personnel can mitigate the loss of personnel through turnover and other deployment disqualification factors, such as medical and personal factors.

²⁷National Guard Bureau Memorandum, *Yearly Planning Guidance 2015-2016 for Homeland Response Force and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High-Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package Entities* (June 19, 2014). This memorandum provides National Guard joint training planning guidance for the HRF and CERFP to develop yearly training plans.

²⁸Three HRF Commanders reported that additional personnel are trained or vaccinated, but did not provide a specific percentage of additional personnel. One HRF Commander reported that about 5 percent more personnel than assigned are trained or vaccinated.

To obtain information on capabilities and readiness of the HRF personnel and equipment, we surveyed the 10 HRF Commanders. In response to our survey question on equipment readiness, the HRF Commanders reported, that in fiscal year 2015, at least one HRF experienced an equipment shortfall in each capability area except in the fatality search and recovery capability. The Joint Mission Essential Equipment List includes the equipment the 10 individual HRFs are authorized to have in their inventory to support the HRF mission.²⁹ Of the nearly 300 different pieces of equipment on the list, the 10 HRF Commanders reported a combined 17 items of the nearly 2,800 total items of equipment held by the 10 HRFs were unavailable at some point in fiscal year 2015. The equipment fell into a variety of categories—primarily associated with vehicles (5 items); vehicle-related items (4 items); communications (3 items); a tent (1 item); equipment associated with protective masks (2 items); air monitoring (1 item); and an air conditioner/heater (1 item). To mitigate shortages, the HRF Commanders reported that they took action generally by using substitute equipment that was authorized by the National Guard Bureau. For example, 8 of the 10 HRF Commanders reported part of the shortfall in equipment reported above was related to the HRF command and control capabilities. However, the eight HRF Commanders reported using authorized substitute equipment to mitigate their shortfall in order to maintain readiness.

Finally, during two of our site visits, HRF officials told us that the recommendations we made in 2011 to increase CERFP preparedness and the effectiveness of operations have focused attention on the National Guard's CBRN Response Enterprise forces and positively impacted the capabilities and readiness of the HRF.³⁰ For example, HRF officials told us that regular updates to the Joint Mission Essential Equipment List, to include equipment needed to perform tasks, and the addition of the Joint Incident Site Communications Capability to support communications during a response help ensure that the HRF has the capabilities and is ready to respond to an CBRN incident.

²⁹National Guard yearly planning guidance states that, in the context of external evaluations, HRFs must ensure 90 percent of the authorized equipment is on hand.

³⁰See GAO, *Homeland Defense and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Additional Steps Could Enhance the Effectiveness of the National Guard's Life-Saving Response Forces*, [GAO-12-114](#), (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 7, 2011).

DOD Has Made Progress Incorporating the HRF into Its CBRN Response Enterprise by Updating Plans, Guidance, and Exercises

Since the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* established the concept of the HRF,³¹ DOD has made progress in incorporating the HRF into the CBRN Response Enterprise by taking steps to update and develop plans, policies, guidance, and exercises. The U.S. Northern Command and the U.S. Pacific Command have incorporated the HRF in the CBRN Response Enterprise by updating their DSCA plans, which describe the capabilities the HRF can provide during a response to a CBRN incident in the United States or in U.S. territories. In addition, the National Guard Bureau has updated and issued its *HRF/CERFP Concept of Operation*, which covers the HRF, and drafted an instruction and supporting manual to provide policy and guidance on the management of the HRF.³² Further, the Army and the Air Force have taken actions to incorporate the HRF operationally by issuing joint guidance on doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures, as well as information setting the foundation for the tactical employment of the HRF.³³ The U.S. Northern Command and the National Guard Bureau continue to make progress in incorporating the HRF into the CBRN Response Enterprise by synchronizing the timing of CBRN exercises. According to U.S. Northern Command and National Guard Bureau officials, the synchronization of these exercises for Title 10 and National Guard forces, beginning in fiscal year 2017, will increase the opportunity for CBRN Response Enterprise forces to exercise together and will focus the exercises on individual regional response.

³¹DOD, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Feb. 1, 2010).

³²The National Guard Bureau issued the instruction as this report was in its final stages. See Chief of the National Guard Bureau Instruction 3510.01, *National Guard Homeland Response Force and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package Management* (June 7, 2016).

³³Army Techniques Publication 3-11.47/Air Force Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures 3-2.79, *Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP)/Homeland Response Force (HRF) Operations*, (Apr. 2013). According to DOD officials, this publication is currently under revision.

DOD Has Incorporated the HRF into Defense Civil Support Plans and Guidance

Aligned with the 2013 *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Defense Support of Civil Authorities* and their DSCA responsibilities in the Unified Command Plan,³⁴ the U.S. Northern Command and the U.S. Pacific Command have developed plans to address their civil support roles, responsibilities, and capabilities.³⁵ The U.S. Northern Command and the U.S. Pacific Command have incorporated the HRF into the CBRN Response Enterprise by updating their DSCA plans with a description of HRF capabilities to support a response to a CBRN incident within the United States and in U.S. territories, in response to the introduction of the HRF in the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*. In our discussions with U.S. Northern Command officials, they highlighted the importance of the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*'s direction in establishing the HRF as part of the CBRN Response Enterprise and viewed this as a priority in achieving progress to increase regional distribution and integration of capabilities, among other things, and to improve the department's mission of defense support of civil authorities.³⁶

The U.S. Northern Command's *CBRN Response Branch Plan*, contained within its DSCA plan, points to the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* as part of the strategic guidance for establishment of the HRF. The branch plan describes how the Command plans for the use of the HRF as a key component of regional response to CBRN incidents within

³⁴DOD, *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Defense Support of Civil Authorities* (Feb. 2013) and The President of the United States *Unified Command Plan*, (Sept. 12, 2011).

³⁵U.S. Northern Command, USNORTHCOM CONPLAN 3500-14, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities Response* (July 17, 2014) and; U.S. Pacific Command, USPACOM CONPLAN 5001-13, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA)* (Dec. 19, 2013). Generally, these plans provide the framework for DSCA response within their respective areas of responsibility from routine, non-emergency requests for support, such as national special security events, up to rapidly responding to a complex catastrophe, such as natural hazards (hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, etc.), localized or regionalized epidemics of infectious diseases, technical and accidental hazards (dam failures, chemical spills or releases), or terrorist attacks.

³⁶In our prior work on defense support of civil authorities, we made recommendations to the Commanders of the U.S. Northern Command and the U.S. Pacific Command to develop an interim set of specific capabilities that could be provided to prepare for and respond to complex catastrophes while the Federal Emergency Management Agency completes its regional planning efforts. DOD concurred with our recommendation and, in June 2015, DOD officials told us that planning had been completed, covering issues such as complex catastrophes, wildland firefighting, and CBRN response. See GAO, *Civil Support: DOD Is Taking Action to Strengthen Support of Civil Authorities*, [GAO-15-686T](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 10, 2015).

the United States and in U.S. territories. In particular, the branch plan identifies the HRF as part of the CBRN Response Enterprise and notes that the HRF serves as a key organization in activities supporting unity of effort among federal, state, and local responders. The branch plan also discusses HRF assistance to the states in the development of their CBRN response plans. In addition, the U.S. Northern Command's DSCA plan highlights the HRF search and extraction capability as part of DOD's support for ground search and rescue operations in response to a complex catastrophe, which are part of a core capability identified in the *National Response Framework*.³⁷

The U.S. Pacific Command's DSCA plan annex on consequence management support operations acknowledges the HRF's important role in regional and state planning efforts for the CBRN Response Enterprise. The U.S. Pacific Command's DSCA plan also notes the use of the HRF in its area of responsibility, which includes Hawaii and U.S. island territories such as Guam, in the event of a large-scale CBRN response. In particular, the plan strongly recommends the use of a dual-status commander for medium- and large-scale consequence management support operations requiring the deployment of a HRF, the Defense CBRN Response Force, or the Command and Control CBRN Response Element follow-on forces.³⁸ U.S. Pacific Command officials stated that the command's DSCA plan anticipates the use of Title 10 CBRN forces already assigned to the area of responsibility to provide immediate response if requested, and also noting a close working relationship with state leadership in Hawaii. The plan contains multiple pre-planned force

³⁷U.S. Northern Command, USNORTHCOM CONPLAN 3500-14, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities Response* (July 17, 2014). The National Response Framework identifies mass search and rescue operations as one of the core capabilities in the response mission area. See Department of Homeland Security, *National Response Framework* (June 2016). In February 2016, we reported on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Urban Search and Rescue program, also part of the *National Response Framework*. We made recommendations to develop a plan to prioritize and fund replacement of search and rescue equipment. The Federal Emergency Management Agency agreed with our recommendation. See, *Disaster Response: FEMA Has Made Progress Implementing Key Programs, but Opportunities for Improvement Exist*, [GAO-16-87](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 5, 2016).

³⁸Dual-status commanders are commissioned officers (Army or Air Force or a federally recognized Army National Guard or Air National Guard officer) who serve as an intermediate link between the separate chains-of-command for state and federal forces and have authority over both National Guard forces under state control and active duty forces under federal control during a civil support incident or special event.

packages, sets of capabilities, to support a response to various incident scenarios, several of which reference the California HRF capabilities. For example, the plan contains a scenario in which a pre-planned force package for CBRN capability would support a response in two geographically-separated areas or islands (e.g., Hawaii, Guam, or American Samoa) in the U.S. Pacific Command's area of responsibility to provide support to CBRN search and extraction, decontamination, emergency medical, ground medical evacuation, aviation medical evacuation and casualty evacuation, and security and logistics. This pre-planned force package identifies active duty, reserve component, and National Guard forces that the U.S. Pacific Command can call upon, including the California HRF.³⁹

The Joint Staff also has issued guidance that incorporates the HRF into CBRN response efforts. Specifically, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has issued an instruction on defense response to CBRN incidents in the homeland. This guidance acknowledges the HRF as part of the DOD CBRN Response Enterprise and that the HRF provides response support during CBRN incidents, primarily under state control.⁴⁰ In addition, Joint Publication 3-41 on CBRN consequence management has been updated to incorporate the HRF as part of the DOD CBRN Response Enterprise, noting the HRF is part of DOD's contribution to a layered CBRN response approach, which requires integration and synchronization of capabilities from the local, state, tribal, and federal levels of government.⁴¹ Further, in 2011, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued an execute order

³⁹U.S. Pacific Command, USPACOM CONPLAN 5001-13, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA)* (Dec. 19, 2013).

⁴⁰See, e.g., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3125.01D, *Defense Response to Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Incidents in the Homeland*, para. 4.a(4) (May 7, 2015).

⁴¹See generally Joint Chief of Staff, Joint Pub. 3-41, *Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Consequence Management* (June 21, 2012). According to DOD officials, this publication is currently under revision.

for CBRN response that includes the HRF as part of the CBRN Response Enterprise.⁴²

National Guard Bureau and Services Have Issued Guidance to Support the Incorporation of the HRF into DOD's CBRN Response Enterprise

Since the issuance of the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* and the National Guard Bureau's *Implementation Base Plan*,⁴³ the National Guard Bureau has made progress in supporting the inclusion of the HRF into DOD's CBRN Response Enterprise by issuing a *HRF/CERFP Concept of Operation*⁴⁴ and drafted an instruction and corresponding manual.⁴⁵ This concept of operation includes an outline of the structure of the HRF elements through task organization charts, provides time frames for a response to CBRN incidents, and provides guidance and expectations for how the HRF will prepare for and respond to a request for support.⁴⁶ The *HRF/CERFP Concept of Operation* reinforces the HRF mission as a support mechanism that responds to CBRN incidents when directed by the Secretary of Defense, coordinated by the Chief of the

⁴²Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Domestic Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Response EXORD* (June 21, 2011). The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff recently issued an updated version of this standing execute order. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Domestic Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Response EXORD* (Mar. 24, 2016). An execute order is an order issued by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the direction of the Secretary of Defense, to implement a decision by the President to initiate military operations. See Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub. 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Nov. 8, 2010) (as amended through Feb. 15, 2016). According to Joint Staff officials, DOD generally creates a standing execute order for anticipated situations that could require a very short response decision to deploy life-saving and similar time-sensitive capabilities.

⁴³The National Guard Bureau's *Implementation Base Plan* outlines its process to incorporate the HRF into the CBRN Response Enterprise. This plan notes key tasks, such as reaching agreements with selected states, sourcing the 10 HRFs, and procuring equipment, and generally includes guidance on establishing and integrating the HRF in the relevant state. National Guard Bureau, *Implementation Base Plan (IMPLAN)–Homeland Response Force (HRF/CERFP)* (Sept. 30, 2010).

⁴⁴A concept of operation is a verbal or graphic statement that clearly and concisely expresses what a Commander intends to accomplish and how it will be done using available resources.

⁴⁵The National Guard Bureau issued the instruction as this report was in its final stages. See Chief of the National Guard Bureau Instruction 3510.01, *National Guard Homeland Response Force and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package Management* (June 7, 2016).

⁴⁶National Guard Bureau, *Homeland Response Force Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package Concept of Operation* (Oct. 14, 2015).

National Guard Bureau, and with the consent of the governors of the affected states. For example, the *HRF/CERFP Concept of Operation* describes the role of the National Guard Coordination Center to coordinate and synchronize notification and deployment of National Guard forces, such as the HRF and any additional follow-on National Guard CBRN forces, in response to a request for support after a CBRN incident. In addition, the National Guard Coordination Center coordinates information exchange between the state requesting support, the National Guard, the U.S. Northern Command, and the National Military Command Center to include information on deployment of National Guard and Title 10 CBRN Response Enterprise forces.

In addition, the National Guard Bureau drafted an instruction and a manual for the management of the HRF, among other CBRN response forces, which National Guard Bureau officials stated will support the incorporation of the HRF into DOD CBRN response operations by informing DOD and state emergency managers about HRF capabilities and response operations. These two guidance documents will also include roles and responsibilities for HRF management and planning expectations, which will support regional response and unity of effort with combatant commands, states, and local first responders in a CBRN incident response. The instruction was issued in June 2016, as this report was in its final stages.⁴⁷ National Guard Bureau officials said that the manual is under review. The guidance is intended for use by DOD's CBRN Response Enterprise and all of the U.S. states' and territories' emergency management departments.

Further, the Army and the Air Force have taken actions to incorporate the HRF by issuing joint guidance.⁴⁸ The guidance provides doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures, as well as information setting the foundation for the tactical employment of the HRF. In addition, the guidance outlines the structure, element composition, capabilities, and planning considerations of the HRF, among other things. For example,

⁴⁷Chief National Guard Bureau Instruction 3510.01, *National Guard Homeland Response Force/Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package Management* (June 7, 2016).

⁴⁸Army Techniques Publication 3-11.47/Air Force Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures 3-2.79, *Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP)/Homeland Response Force (HRF) Operations* (Apr. 2013). According to DOD officials, this publication is currently under revision.

the joint guidance describes the roles and responsibilities of the HRF personnel and capabilities.

DOD Is Increasing the Opportunity for the HRF to Exercise with Other Enterprise Members

DOD is making progress in incorporating the HRF into the CBRN Response Enterprise by synchronizing National Guard Bureau- and U.S. Northern Command-sponsored exercise schedules, thereby increasing the opportunity for the HRF to exercise with the other National Guard and Title 10 CBRN Response Enterprise forces.

The National Guard Bureau's yearly planning guidance outlines exercise requirements for the HRF.⁴⁹ At a minimum, the HRFs are expected to participate in collective training exercises with two or more HRFs and CERFPs. The guidance indicates that, during collective training, the HRF should be assessed using the Joint Mission Essential Task List, which includes the tasks likely to be used during a response to a CBRN incident. Each organization is synchronizing its exercise schedule with the primary collective exercises, Vibrant Response and Vigilant Guard.⁵⁰

U.S. Northern Command officials told us that its exercises will be synchronized by fiscal year 2017. National Guard Bureau officials told us that it will take 2 more years to synchronize its exercise schedule because planning for exercises in fiscal years 2016 and 2017 is already underway. In particular, National Guard Bureau officials are in the process of synchronizing a 6-year exercise schedule from fiscal year 2018 through fiscal year 2023 that includes the consolidation and alignment of the evaluations, inspections, Vigilant Guard, collective training exercises, and special focus exercises for the HRF and other regional CBRN forces.

According to U.S. Northern Command and National Guard Bureau officials, synchronization will increase the opportunity for National Guard

⁴⁹National Guard Bureau Memorandum, *Yearly Planning Guidance 2015-2016 for Homeland Response Force and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High-Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package Entities* (June 19, 2014).

⁵⁰The Vibrant Response exercise is held once a year to practice federal domestic emergency management response. U.S. Northern Command officials who manage the CBRN Response Enterprise use Vibrant Response as an opportunity to exercise the Title 10 CBRN response forces with civil authorities. The Vigilant Guard exercise is held four times a year in different regions throughout the United States to practice state and regional domestic emergency management response. National Guard officials use Vigilant Guard as an opportunity to exercise the HRF, CERFP, and Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Teams in response to a CBRN incident.

and Title 10 forces to exercise together and will focus the exercises on individual regional response. In support of increasing the opportunity for Title 10 and National Guard forces to exercise together, U.S. Northern Command issued guidance that authorizes the deployment of part of the Title 10 Defense CBRN Response Force to participate in National Guard-sponsored Vigilant Guard exercises. This includes allowing personnel from the Defense CBRN Response Force participating in the exercise to be under the command and control structure established for the specific Vigilant Guard exercise, which may include operating under a dual-status commander construct.⁵¹ Figure 6 shows the Region X (Washington) HRF participating in a CBRN exercise.

Figure 6: Region X (Washington) Homeland Response Force Casualty Assistance Support Element Participates in a CBRN Exercise



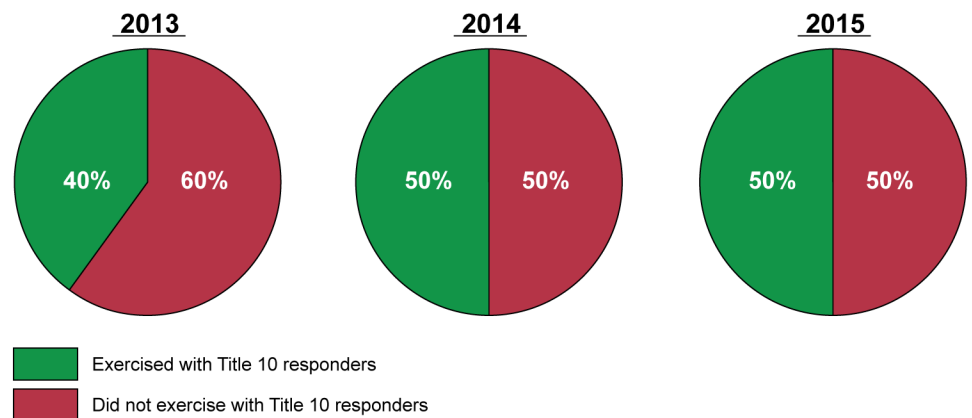
CBRN: Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear

Source: National Guard, Washington Homeland Response Force. | GAO-16-599

⁵¹U.S. Northern Command Fragmentary Order (FRAGO) 187.000 to USNORTHCOM Operations Order 01-13, *Guidance for C2 of Federal CRE Forces* (Jan. 25, 2016). The guidance states that in an operational setting rather than an exercise, the federal portion of the CBRN Response Enterprise (which would include the Defense CBRN Response Force), will operate a parallel command and control structure with the state National Guard forces and will not be subordinate to a dual-status commander.

In response to our survey, about half of the HRF Commanders reported that they had exercised with Title 10 CBRN response forces in fiscal years 2013-15, as shown in figure 7.⁵²

Figure 7: About Half of the Homeland Response Forces Reported Exercising with Department of Defense Title 10^a CBRN Responders in Fiscal Years 2013-15



CBRN: Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear

Source: GAO analysis of survey response data from Homeland Response Force Commanders. | GAO-16-599

^aThe term "Title 10" generally is used to refer to forces that are federally funded and under the command and control of the President and the Secretary of Defense.

With the synchronization of these exercises with other scheduled events and exercises (i.e., special focus events, evaluations, inspections, deployment readiness exercises, and other collective training events), CBRN Response Enterprise forces will likely have more opportunities to practice command and control and the dual-status commander concept together. National Guard Bureau officials stated that the regional synchronization and alignment will provide the HRF and other National Guard units more opportunities to participate in exercises within their region and in neighboring regions, where they would be most likely to provide support in response to a CBRN incident.

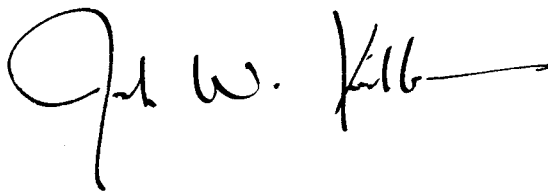
⁵²The National Guard completed the establishment of the 10 HRFs by the end of fiscal year 2012; therefore, we have not included exercise information from fiscal year 2012 in our report.

Agency Comments

We are not making any recommendations in this report. DOD reviewed a draft of this report and provided written and technical comments, which we incorporated where appropriate. In its written response, DOD expressed appreciation that the report found DOD made improvements to ensure fulfillment of its support of civil authority in response to a CBRN incident. DOD's written response is in appendix III.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees; Secretaries of Defense, Energy, and Homeland Security; the Attorney General of the United States; the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Global Security; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Commanders, U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Pacific Command; the Secretaries of the Army and the Air Force; Chief, National Guard Bureau; Commanders of the Homeland Response Force; and the Directors, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Office of Management and Budget; and Administrators, Environmental Protection Agency, National Nuclear Security Agency. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions concerning this report, please contact Joseph W. Kirschbaum at (202) 512-9971 or kirschbaumj@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix IV.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe W. Kirschbaum", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joseph W. Kirschbaum
Director
Defense Capabilities and Management

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

To describe the current status of the Homeland Response Force (HRF) capabilities, we examined evaluations of capabilities and surveyed all 10 HRF Commanders. We analyzed the most recent evaluation reports, issued in fiscal years 2013-15, on each of the 10 HRFs performance of necessary tasks within each capability to meet the HRF mission—to save lives and reduce human suffering—as presented in the *HRF/CERFP Concept of Operation*.¹ We analyzed each HRF evaluation report to identify any systemic capability strengths or areas for improvement that the National Guard Bureau had identified during individual HRF evaluations. In addition, we reviewed summary results of evaluations conducted for fiscal years 2011-13 to understand the types of capabilities issues that were identified in the first 2 years of the establishment of the HRF. The National Guard Bureau's Joint Interagency Training and Education Center relies on the use of standard actions and tasks, from the Joint Mission Essential Task List and Training and Exercise Outlines, for each HRF capability to ensure the validity of the evaluation. In addition, the Joint Interagency Training and Education Center uses a standard grading process during the evaluation to ensure the reliability of each HRF evaluation. We reviewed the process used by the Joint Interagency Training and Education Center to ensure the reliability and validity of its own evaluation process and determined that the evaluation process was sufficient for our use in assessing the status of HRF capabilities. We relied on the results of those 10 evaluations rather than conducting an independent assessment of HRF capabilities.

To describe the status of HRF readiness, we examined readiness information and conducted a survey of all 10 HRF Commanders. In accordance with the HRF's *Concept of Operation* and the Department of Defense's (DOD) Defense Readiness Reporting System, we focused our review of readiness on the personnel, related training, and equipment necessary to conduct the HRF mission in response to a chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) incident. In the Defense Readiness Reporting System, training is reported as part of the assessment of HRF personnel. We reviewed readiness ratings for each HRF as recorded in DOD's Defense Readiness Reporting System for fiscal year 2012, the first year all 10 HRFs were established, through March 2016. In addition, we reviewed the HRF Commanders' comments

¹National Guard Bureau, *Homeland Response Force Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear/High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package Concept of Operation* (Oct. 14, 2015).

input into the Defense Readiness Reporting System, to identify any issues impacting readiness. We conducted a data reliability assessment of the information in DOD's Defense Readiness Reporting System. We provided a questionnaire on the readiness system to officials in the National Guard Bureau's CBRN Enterprise Training and Readiness Office. We reviewed their responses to our questionnaire and interviewed the official responsible for maintaining the readiness data input by each HRF. During two site visits, we observed how the HRF personnel input information into their system. We determined that the readiness information from the Defense Readiness Reporting System was reliable for our purposes.

In addition, we sent a survey to all 10 HRF Commanders on the personnel, the relevance of training on readiness, and on equipment needed to conduct the mission. As part of the survey development, we conducted an expert review and pre-tested the draft survey. We submitted the questionnaire for review by our survey specialist, our subject matter expert on CBRN, and HRF topic experts from the National Guard Bureau. The expert review phase was intended to ensure that content necessary to understand the questions was included and that technical information included in the survey was correct. To minimize errors that might occur from respondents interpreting our questions differently than we intended, we pre-tested our questionnaire with Commanders and senior staff from three HRFs. During the pre-tests conducted by video teleconference and telephone, we asked the HRF officials to read the instructions and each question aloud and to tell us how they interpreted the question. We then discussed the instructions and questions with officials to identify any problems and potential solutions by determining whether (1) the instructions and questions were clear and unambiguous, (2) the terms we used were accurate, (3) the questionnaire was unbiased, (4) the questionnaire did not place an undue burden on the officials completing it. We noted any potential problems and modified the questionnaire based on feedback from the expert reviewers and pre-tests, as appropriate. In addition, we provided the survey to the National Guard Bureau for a classification review to determine whether any of the survey questions would elicit classified responses and/or whether the compilation of the survey responses themselves would create a classified response. National Guard Bureau officials determined that the survey responses would not be classified.

We sent an email to each HRF Commander beginning on November 16, 2015, notifying them about the topics of our survey and when we expected to send the survey. We then sent the

self-administered Microsoft Word form questionnaire and a cover email to the HRF Commanders on November 18, 2015, and asked them to fill in the questionnaire and email it back to us within 2 weeks. We closed the survey on December 14, 2015. We received 10 completed questionnaires for an overall response rate of 100 percent. Because we collected data from every HRF rather than a sample of forces, there was no sampling error. However, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce errors, commonly referred to as non-sampling errors. For example, differences in how a particular question is interpreted, the sources of information available to respondents, how the responses were processed and analyzed, or the types of people who do not respond can influence the accuracy of the survey results. We took steps in the development of the survey, the data collection, and the data analysis to minimize these non-sampling errors and help ensure the accuracy of the answers that were obtained. For example, a social science survey specialist designed the questionnaire, in collaboration with our staff with subject matter expertise. Then, as noted earlier, the draft questionnaire was pre-tested to ensure that questions were relevant, clearly stated, and easy to comprehend. The questionnaire was also reviewed by external experts at the National Guard Bureau and our survey specialist, as mentioned above. Data were electronically extracted from the Microsoft Word questionnaires into a comma-delimited file that was then imported into a statistical program for analyses. Only one variable was manually entered (the HRF's state) and that data entry accuracy was verified. We examined the survey results and performed computer analyses to identify inconsistencies and other indications of error, and addressed such issues as necessary. Quantitative data analyses were conducted by our survey specialist using statistical software and a review of open-ended responses was conducted by our staff with subject matter expertise. A data analyst conducted an independent check of the statistical computer programs for accuracy.

In figure 8, we show the verbatim wording of key survey questions whose results are discussed in this report.

Figure 8: Key Questions from Our Survey of the 10 HRF Commanders on Personnel, the Relevance of Training on Readiness, and on Equipment Needed to Conduct the HRF Mission

- 1. During FY 2015, were there any shortfalls in your HRF unit's Joint Mission Essential Equipment List (JMEEL) authorized equipment in the following CBRN incident-related mission essential tasks? Please complete each row**

Task	Unsure	No	Yes	If Yes, what JMEEL-authorized equipment did you not have?
HRF C ²	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
CBRN assistance & support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
CERFP C ² (CBRN Task Force)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Search and extraction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Fatality search & recovery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Decontamination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Medical triage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

- a. If you identified any JMEEL-authorized equipment shortfalls, what were the reasons for the shortfalls and what were the impacts, if any? The box will expand as you type.**

- 2. During FY 2015, did you use authorized substitute equipment to address any shortfalls in the JMEEL-authorized equipment in the following CBRN incident-related mission essential tasks? Please complete each row**

Task	N/A	Unsure	No	Yes	If Yes, what substitute equipment did you use?
HRF C ²	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
CBRN assistance & support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
CERFP C ² (CBRN Task Force)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Search and extraction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Fatality search & recovery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Decontamination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Medical triage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Source: GAO. | GAO-16-599

^aFY is the abbreviation for fiscal year.

20. During FY 2013, did your HRF unit perform its CBRN incident-related mission essential tasks within an exercise at least once with each of the following entities? *Please check one box in each row*

Entity	Unsure	Yes	No	If no, why not?
Elements of other states' HRFs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other National Guard units other than HRFs.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Title 10 DOD responders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Federal non-DOD responders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
State or Local responders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

21. During FY 2014, did your HRF unit perform its CBRN incident-related mission essential tasks within an exercise at least once with each of the following entities? *Please check one box in each row*

Entity	Unsure	Yes	No	If No, why not?
Elements of other states' HRFs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other National Guard units other than HRFs.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Title 10 DOD responders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Federal non-DOD responders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
State or Local responders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

22. During FY 2015, did your HRF unit perform its CBRN incident-related mission essential tasks within an exercise at least once with each of the following entities? *Please check one box in each row*

Entity	Unsure	Yes	No	If No, why not?
Elements of other states' HRFs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other National Guard units other than HRFs.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Title 10 DOD responders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Federal non-DOD responders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
State or Local responders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Source: GAO. | GAO-16-599

^aFY is the abbreviation for fiscal year.

Finally, we selected four HRFs to visit to discuss and observe the actions taken to maintain HRF capabilities and readiness that we examined in the National Guard Bureau's evaluations and readiness reports. While our discussions and observations from these visits are not generalizable, the information we collected from the HRF Commanders and their personnel provide context for the evaluation results and the Commanders' comments from the readiness reporting systems. The primary factor we

considered in selecting which HRFs to visit was the deployment of HRF capabilities. We also considered information about:

- CBRNE threats to the homeland and U.S. territories;
- HRF unit readiness data;
- Exercise schedules of the individual HRF during our travel period;
- HRFs that had been deployed;
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency's urban areas security initiative designation;
- HRFs with geo-specific or regional plans; and
- Input from officials with knowledge of the HRF or geographic region, including the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Global Security, the National Guard Bureau, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

We chose to conduct four site visits to the HRFs located the Federal Emergency Management Agency Region III (Pennsylvania), Region IV (Georgia), Region VI (Texas), and Region X (Washington). We chose these HRFs because they deployed part of their force to support civil authority, had upcoming exercises scheduled, or were recommended by officials knowledgeable of the HRF. During our site visits, we interviewed HRF Commanders and personnel about mission capabilities and readiness and the actions they take to maintain capabilities and readiness. In addition, we reviewed equipment inventories and observed some of the temporary facilities used to support a CBRN response.

To assess the extent to which DOD has made progress incorporating the HRF into its CBRN Response Enterprise, we collected plans, policies, and guidance from the National Guard Bureau; the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the U.S. Northern Command; the U.S. Pacific Command; the Army; and the Air Force.

We reviewed DOD guidance and other documents including the *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Defense Support of Civil Authorities*² as well as the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*³ to gain an

²DOD, *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Defense Support of Civil Authorities* (Feb. 2013); U.S. Northern Command, USNORTHCOM CONPLAN 3500-14, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities Response* (July 17, 2014) and U.S. Pacific Command, USPACOM CONPLAN 5001-13, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA)* (Dec. 19, 2013).

³See DOD, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Feb. 1, 2010).

understanding of the department's priorities and efforts to restructure the enterprise and its support of civil authorities during CBRN incidents in the United States. We also reviewed U.S. Northern Command's and U.S. Pacific Command's Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) plans to assess the extent to which the combatant commands incorporated the HRF into their plans. In addition, we examined the National Guard Bureau's HRF policies and guidance, including the *Implementation Base Plan (IMPLAN)–Homeland Response Force (HRF/CERFP)* and the *HRF/CERFP Concept of Operation*, and a draft instruction and manual on the management of the HRF, to determine the extent to which the National Guard Bureau incorporated the HRF into its CBRN response.⁴ Further, we examined the Army and Air Force's joint guidance for HRF operations, *Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP)/Homeland Response Force (HRF) Operations*, to understand the military services' inclusion of the HRF in their operations guidance.⁵ We compared these actions with the direction and guidance for DOD's efforts to, among other things, create faster response times and increase regional distribution and integration of DOD CBRN response assets, outlined in the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, the 2010 National Guard Bureau *Implementation Base Plan* for the introduction of the concept and establishment of the HRF, and the 2013 *DOD Strategy for Homeland Defense and Defense Support of Civil Authorities*. We interviewed DOD officials within the U.S. Northern Command, the U.S. Pacific Command, and the National Guard Bureau about the inclusion of the HRF into DOD's CBRN Response Enterprise. Finally, we collected information and planning documents on the U.S. Northern Command- and the National Guard Bureau-sponsored exercises to determine whether the HRF was incorporated into DOD's CBRN Response Forces exercises. We surveyed the 10 HRF Commanders about their participation in exercises with other DOD CBRN response forces. In addition, we interviewed DOD officials from the U.S. Northern Command, the National Guard Bureau,

⁴The National Guard Bureau issued the instruction as this report was in its final stages. See Chief of the National Guard Bureau Instruction 3510.01, *National Guard Homeland Response Force and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package Management* (June 7, 2016).

⁵Army Techniques Publication 3-11.47/Air Force Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures 3-2.79, *Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP)/Homeland Response Force (HRF) Operations* (Apr. 2013).

and the four HRF staffs during our site visits to Georgia, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington, about the types of exercises they conduct on CBRN response and opportunities to practice with other DOD CBRN forces.

We obtained relevant documentation and interviewed officials from the following organizations:

List of Organizations Where We Obtained Documentation and Interviewed Officials

- Department of Defense
 - Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Global Security
 - National Guard Bureau
 - Joint Staff
 - U.S. Northern Command
 - U.S. Pacific Command
 - U.S. Marine Corps, Chemical Biological Incident Response Force
 - Defense CBRN Response Force
 - Command and Control CBRN Response Element A/B
- Department of Homeland Security
 - Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Department of Energy
 - National Nuclear Security Agency
- Department of Justice
 - Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Environmental Protection Agency
 - Office of Land and Emergency Management
- California
 - Region IX National Guard Homeland Response Force
- Georgia
 - Georgia Emergency Management Agency
 - Region IV National Guard Homeland Response Force
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 - Hawaii National Guard
- Massachusetts
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- Missouri
 - Region VII National Guard Homeland Response Force
- New York
 - Region II National Guard Homeland Response Force
- Ohio
 - Region V National Guard Homeland Response Force

-
- Pennsylvania
 - Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency
 - Region III National Guard Homeland Response Force
 - Texas
 - Texas State Operations Center
 - Region VI National Guard Homeland Response Force
 - Utah
 - Region VIII National Guard Homeland Response Force
 - Washington
 - Washington State Emergency Operations Center
 - Region X National Guard Homeland Response Force

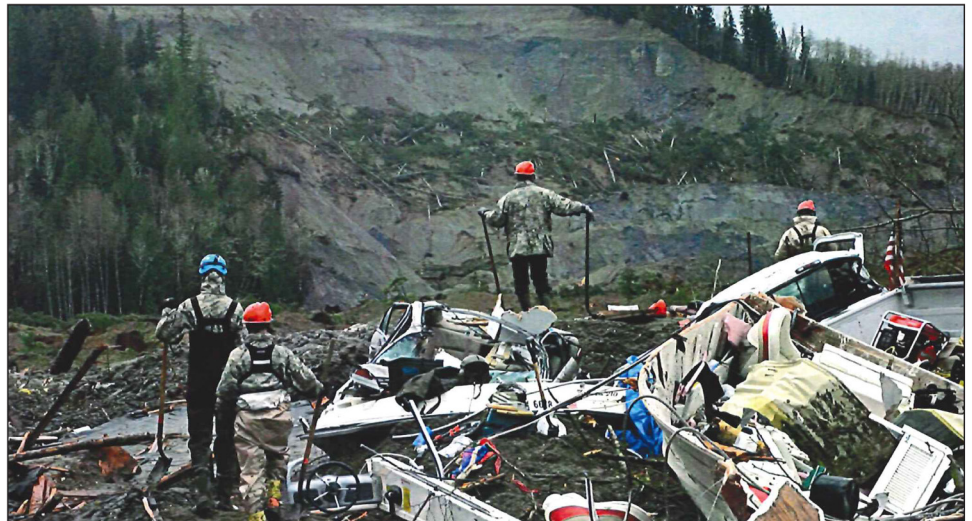
We conducted this performance audit from August 2015 to June 2016 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: Examples of Homeland Response Force Support of Civil Authorities

Since their establishment by 2012, an entire Homeland Response Force (HRF) has not deployed in support of civil authorities during a chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) incident response. However, one HRF partially deployed to support a natural disaster response and other HRFs have participated in planning for, and were prepared to respond during, national special security events (e.g., political conventions, major sporting events, etc.) in case of an incident. The following are examples of the HRFs' response in support of civil authorities:

- **Washington landslide.** Members of the Region X (Washington) HRF participated in the response to the March 22, 2014, Oso landslide in Snohomish County, Washington. The landslide claimed 43 lives—making it the deadliest landslide in U.S. history, completely destroying Steelhead Haven, a community of about 50 homes, and burying portions of State Route 530 for 2 months. A state of emergency was declared following the landslide and a request was made to deploy some of the Region X (Washington) HRF capabilities. The HRF provided personnel to assist civilian fatality search and recovery responders, and personnel, logistics, operations, and finance to support the National Guard headquarters staff during the operation. HRF personnel were on State Active Duty orders under the direct control of the Incident Commander. Figure 9 shows the Region X (Washington) HRF responding to the landslide in Snohomish County, Washington, in March 2014.

Figure 9: Region X (Washington) Homeland Response Force Responding to the 2014 Landslide in Snohomish County, Washington



Source: National Guard, Washington Homeland Response Force. | GAO-16-599

- **Region III (Pennsylvania) HRF planning.** According to officials with the Region III (Pennsylvania) Army National Guard, members of the Pennsylvania HRF participated in planning from March 2015 through September 2015 for the Papal visit to the United States in September 2015. The HRF worked with the other Pennsylvania Air National Guard forces, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. Secret Service, and the Philadelphia Fire Urban Search and Rescue. The Region III HRF used the Papal visit as a concurrent training exercise covering three national special security events for the Papal visit in Washington, D.C.; New York City, New York; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The deliberate participation in the planning phase and in the on-site stand-by during the event provided members of the HRF with an opportunity to interact with city, county, state and commonwealth, and federal officials. This provided an opportunity to integrate the Region III HRF capabilities into a tiered response plan in the event of a CBRN incident during the Papal visit.
- **Region IV (Georgia) HRF planning.** According to officials with the Georgia National Guard, members of the Region IV (Georgia) HRF participated in planning for a coordinated response to a CBRN or other incident during the September 2012 Democratic National Convention held in Charlotte, North Carolina. Along with state and local responders, HRF personnel participated in the planning by providing state and local officials information about the capabilities it could provide in a response to a CBRN incident. In total, the Region IV HRF and other National Guard personnel were prepositioned during the event in Charlotte, North Carolina, as well as in Rock Hill and Columbia, South Carolina, to support any flow of response forces into the city to reduce response time, save lives, and reduce human suffering after an incident.

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Defense



HOMELAND DEFENSE &
GLOBAL SECURITY

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2600

9 JUN 2018

Mr. Joseph Kirschbaum
Director, Defense Capabilities Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Kirschbaum:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft Report, GAO-16-599SU, "DEFENSE CIVIL SUPPORT: DoD Has Made Progress Incorporating the Homeland Response Forces into Its Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Response Enterprise," dated May 18, 2016 (GAO Code 100189).

Thank you for the opportunity to review this important GAO report. We greatly appreciate the report's acknowledgement of improvements made to ensure DoD can fulfill its responsibility to support civil authorities in response to a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, or Nuclear incident.

Our point of contact for this action is COL Dennis Emmert, (571) 256-8334 or dennis.j.emmert.mil@mail.mil.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Salesses
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
Homeland Defense Integration &
Defense Support of Civil Authorities

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Joseph W. Kirschbaum, (202) 512-9971 or kirschbaumj@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, GAO staff who made contributions to this report include Mark A. Pross, Assistant Director; Jennifer Cheung; Ashley Grant; Mae Jones; Amie Lesser; Amber Lopez Roberts; Elizabeth Morris; Richard Powelson; Bethann E. Ritter Snyder; Michael Shaughnessy; Michael Silver; and Maria Storts.

Related GAO Reports

Disaster Response: FEMA Has Made Progress Implementing Key Programs, but Opportunities for Improvement Exist. [GAO-16-87](#). Washington, D.C.: February 5, 2016.

Civil Support: DOD Is Taking Action to Strengthen Support of Civil Authorities. [GAO-15-686T](#). Washington, D.C.: June 10, 2015.

Civil Support: Actions Are Needed to Improve DOD's Planning for a Complex Catastrophe. [GAO-13-763](#). Washington, D.C.: September 30, 2013.

Homeland Defense: DOD Needs to Address Gaps in Homeland Defense and Civil Support Guidance. [GAO-13-128](#). Washington, D.C.: October 24, 2012.

Homeland Defense and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Additional Steps Could Enhance the Effectiveness of the National Guard's Life-Saving Response Forces. [GAO-12-114](#). Washington, D.C.: December 7, 2011.

Homeland Defense: DOD Can Enhance Efforts to Identify Capabilities to Support Civil Authorities during Disasters. [GAO-10-386](#). Washington, D.C.: March 30, 2010.

Homeland Defense: U.S. Northern Command Has a Strong Exercise Program, but Involvement of Interagency Partners and States Can Be Improved. [GAO-09-849](#). Washington, D.C.: September 9, 2009.

Homeland Defense: Steps Have Been Taken to Improve U.S. Northern Command's Coordination with States and the National Guard Bureau, but Gaps Remain. [GAO-08-252](#). Washington, D.C.: April 16, 2008.

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